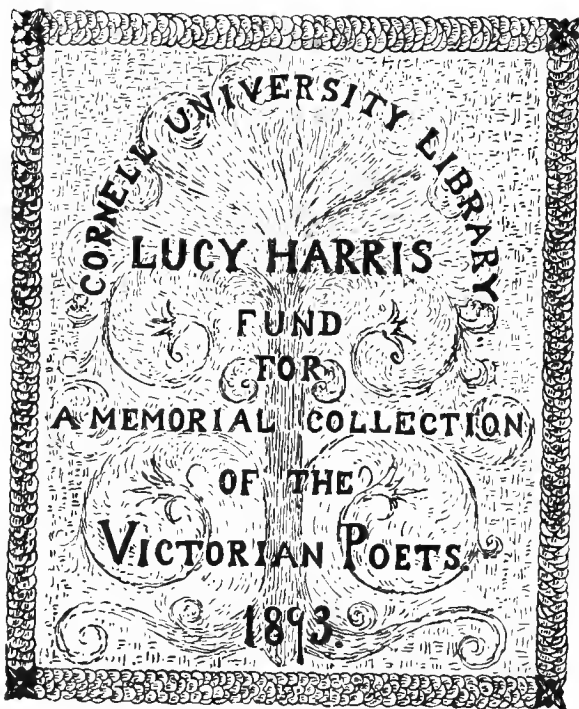


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Paris and Enone

By

Laurence Binyon



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PARIS AND CENONE

*BY THE AUTHOR OF "PARIS
AND CENONE"*

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BY

LAURENCE BINYON

AUTHOR OF "PENTHESILEA," "THE DEATH OF ADAM,"
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PARIS AND CÆNONE.

A TRAGEDY IN ONE ACT.

SCENE: *Mount Ida. At the right a hut covered with vines, half seen. In the background trees and bushes with an opening near the centre, through which a path descends into the plain of Troy below. Evening falling. Two girls, PYRGO and MELISSA, appear through the opening, having climbed the path. PYRGO enters first.*

Pyrgo.

COME, we are late.

Melissa.

Oh, I am out of breath.

Pyrgo.

The woodcutters are waving us good-night.
See what a pile of timber they have made;
And still the tallest oak-tree is to fall.

Melissa.

I love to watch them: let us wait a moment.
Look, they are tugging at the cords, it quivers,
It cracks and rocks. How fearfully it hangs!
It is falling, look! still falling; it is down!
Oh, what a groan! Did Hector fall so grandly
When fierce Achilles smote him? Even so
He must have fallen.

Pyrgo.

Shame on you, Melissa!
 Have you the heart to name that day of woe?
 The broken heart of Troy sent up that day
 A groan, which even now is in my ears.
 I heard it on the mountains, and I wept,
 Although I knew not what great cause I had.

Melissa.

I was a child then. But I wonder much
 What was the wailing that to-day we heard
 Down by the city gates. These many hours
 They have been closed, and the plain empty; yet
 When we passed by this morning, how we saw
 The battle run like breakers in a bay,
 Tossing with plumes and lances!

Pyrgo.

Come away.

The pathway will be dark under the trees.

Melissa.

Pyrgo, is Priam dead, or Agamemnon?
 Or is it fair Prince Paris? What hath happened?

Pyrgo.

Hush, lest CEnone hear you, and her eye
 Look askance on you; she has power to change
 The bloom upon your cheek, and wither up
 The udders of our sheep and waste our flocks.

Melissa.

She has no power to lure her Paris back.

Pyrgo.

Yet she can charm the almost dead to life.
 When Meladon was bitten by the viper
 Two summers past, and all his flesh was cold
 And pale as mushrooms, she found certain leaves

That sucked the poison sweetly out, and now——

Melissa.

His cheek is brown as any hazel nut.

How strange! Had I such magic at my will,

Soon would I lure Prince Paris to my feet.

Pyrgo.

You have not seen his lady Helen's eyes!

Melissa.

But she is Greek, and Menelaus' queen.

Pyrgo.

Hush!

Melissa.

Is it here she dwells?

Pyrgo. [*Nodding.*]

Still beautiful

She is, for I have seen her, and they say

She was once happy. But we loiter long.

Come, come.

Melissa.

I'm following. Oh, a violet!

I should have crushed it with another step.

It is all dewy, and it smells of spring.

The first found is the sweetest.

Pyrgo. [*Climbing a steep path at the right.*]

Take my hand.

Look down, there is a litter coming up.

Melissa.

And it has stopped among the woodcutters,

The bearers speak with them. Oh, let us stay.

Pyrgo.

We must not, hush! CENONE's coming forth.

[*The girls, often glancing back, ascend the path
at the right. CENONE comes out, right.*]

During the following speech she brings out logs from the hut, and piles them, one by one, in the centre of the stage.

Cenone.

Last night I dreamed of Paris. There he seemed
 To rise upon the darkness, Oh, how pale!
 Some mortal languor had subdued his limbs:
 His head drooped backward, heavy like a flower
 When hail has hurt it: his lips moved not, but
 His gaze was of a spirit deep in pain.
 One arm hung listless; but I thought the other
 Was in the motion to stretch out toward me,
 Then paused, as if unwilling so to plead.
 An evil omen!—yet, that arm toward me
 Half lifted, and that look!
 —If he be wounded, what is that to me?
 In Helen's arms he rests, and Helen's hands
 Are soothing his hot temples; he looks up
 In Helen's eyes.—
 You little tender shoots upon the vine
 You swell with the sweet spring, how can you swell
 So confident and blithe? Can you not feel
 Already ere your grapes have coloured round
 And ripened, the rude hands of vintagers,
 Strong-fingered jesting boys and laughing girls,
 Crush your red blood to make the merry wine?
 So my hope grows, and so its blood is crushed
 To make the mirth of others; and yet still
 I hope! Was ever woman fool as I?
 They call Cassandra wretched, because none
 Believes her word, yet she at least believes.
[She kindles a fire.
 Break into flame, shoot bright, my signal fire!

Once you could call my Paris up from Troy!
 He left the dances and the feasts for me.
 Clear burns the old wood. O that my heart were old,
 Old, sere, and dry, and burning in this flame,
 That I might perish clean in the white fire,
 Forget, and have no aching at my breast,
 No waking out of dreams, quite, quite forget.—
 They call me sorceress,
 Imagine I have power to sway the moon
 And lead astray the stars: and power I have,
 As shepherds know, to heal the serpent's bite.
 Young Meladon I healed, though he was dying,
 And gave him to his weeping love again.
 Oh, that day I was happy. Even to-day
 I saw on yonder crag the little herb
 Which in my hand was life, shooting afresh.
 To others I can still bring life and joy:
 Only myself I have no power to heal.

[*She lies down by the fire.*]

Ten years, ten years, gone like a single sigh!
 For me; but not for him! Oh, he is changed.
 He is not now that Paris, whose young brow
 Shone like a god's, to look on whom was hope,
 To hear, delight.—He goes to Helen now.
 The evening brings him. Miserable me!
 —Ah yet,
 The queen of Menelaus cannot know
 The glory of the spring, when we were young,
 When—O that hour of hours!—he stole to me
 Full of the wondrous news
 How he, the shepherd's boy, whom all men praised
 And all men loved, who kept their flocks from harm,
 Who slew the wolf and lion without fear,

How he was Prince of Troy, and Priam's eldest son.

Oh, royal were the thoughts of his heart's youth

Poured out for me that day. Ah me, the first

Of all those thousand kisses that of old

Would naturally flower upon his lips!

I only have the honey of those hours,

Those old hours, those sweet hours. . . .

[*The voice of PARIS coming up the hill, faintly heard.*]

Cenone!

Cenone.

That was my love's voice! No, no.

Paris. [*Nearer.*]

Cenone!

Cenone.

Oh, I fear.

Paris. [*Appearing.*]

Cenone!

Cenone.

Defend me from ill dreams! He is so pale!

[*Rising to her knees and turning round.*]

Why comest thou again this second time?

Oh, Paris, is it over? Art thou free?

Dear spirit, leavest thou the world to take

Farewell of thy Cenone? Now at last

The sweetness runs about my heart again.

Paris, my golden Paris, glide not yet

To Lethe water; let me bless thee first,

Because my name was still upon thy lips.

Remember me, beloved!

Paris. [*Moving a pace nearer.*]

Fear me not.

It is no fleshless phantom, but myself,

Paris! I breathe, my heart yet beats. Be glad!

The signal fire is kindled; I am come.

Cenone.

Touch me not, mocker. Now I hate you. Go.

Paris.

Cenone, I am Paris, whom you loved.

What sudden madness changes you? even now

The words of love sound blessed in my ears.

Cenone.

I thought you dead, I thought you freed, I thought
Your death-delivered spirit flew to me.

Oh, never else would I have spoken so!

You shame me, you betray me. When I thought

That you were that dead Paris whom I loved,

Alas, that moment I was happy: now

It is a dream; now you are Helen's. Go!

Paris.

Cenone, I am wounded, I am dying!

Here on my shoulder where your head was used

To rest above the beating of my heart,

And your soft hair flowed over both my arms,

And your sweet breath was mingled with my own,

Here, here hath Philoctetes' poisoned barb

Grazed the firm flesh; a little wound it is,

But pierces me with agony, and now

From head to heel through all my veins I burn,

I burn with fire all Simois could not cool.

But you, that know the power of every herb,

Heal me, for only you can heal me now,

Cenone!

Cenone.

Go to Helen, ask of her.

Paris.

Speak not of her. Would I had never crossed

The salt blue seas that smiled before my sail
On that too prosperous voyage! Would that storms
Had drowned me deep under the senseless surge,
Or ever I had seen Eurotas' banks
And Lacedaemon's hills. Would I had stayed
For ever here on Ida, our dear home!

Cenone.

The web once woven we cannot unweave.

Paris.

The unkind gods made me their instrument.

Cenone.

They chose you, Paris, for your fickle heart.

Paris.

I have been fickle, yes, and wandered far,
But the heart comes home at last; I come to you.
As I came hither, every step shed off
Days, years, and brought me nearer to my youth.
The springs of Ida murmured to my soul,
Sick with this endless toil in blood and spears,
There where I played to you whole summer days
Upon my shepherd's pipe. The woodcutters
Remembered me, and wept to see my pain.
They loved me well of old and love me still,
Though now it is far different from then,
When I was young on Ida, and was famed
For fighting with wild beasts and not with men,
Not with revengeful men, whose murderous swords
I am cursed for bringing on my country now!
The shepherds praised me, that I slew the wolf
And hunted the lion afar; and strangled the bear in
his den:

They called me their strong Helper in their songs,
Made feasts for me, and I was crowned with flowers,

And many a maiden pined to have my love,
But I loved you, CEnone, and you loved me.
Oh, had it always been as it then was!

CEnone.

Ah, ah! alas! as then it was, alas!
But vain is looking back; this is the end.

Paris.

CEnone, heal me; I grow faint, I die.

CEnone.

So Helen cannot heal you, cannot kiss
The life back, though she kiss a thousand times!
To me, to me your heart cries in its pain:
I only hold the door to your desire.

—What if I open it? Find you that so sweet
Which is to me the driving of a nail
Each day the deeper, here? [*Beating her breast.*]

Paris.

Oh, misery!

CEnone. [*To herself.*]

I cannot bear this longer.

Paris.

Ah, see now

How low is Paris fallen at your feet;
He is dying at your feet. Since love is gone,
And pity gone, while yet your Paris breathes,
Recall the time when he was what he was,
Not what he is; CEnone, once, but once,
Those happy hours remember!

CEnone.

Have I not

Remembered them? Those soft uncounted hours,
Spun for our pleasure out of smoothest wool,
I never knew their sweetness till 'twas gone,

And Life unmasking showed her Fury face,
And knotted the remembrance for my scourge.

Paris.

Oh, wretch, wretch, perjured, base wretch that I
am!

I left a ruby richer than the world

In this true heart. I have no will to live,

I have deserved to die this bitter death.

Look on me gently, CEnone, turn your face

Once more, for the last time, on dying Paris,

Who loves you, loves you. *[He faints.]*

CEnone. *[Lifting his head to rest on her lap.]*

No, no, Paris, live!

I have been cruel; dear, uncloseth your eyes.

Look up, look into mine. I weep for you.

You shall not die.

Paris. *[Opening his eyes.]*

I love you.

CEnone.

It is sweet.

Paris.

CEnone, let me die but in your arms!

CEnone.

You shall not die, for I will heal you.

Paris.

Weep not, CEnone!

CEnone.

Let them drop,

The tears that comfort me.

Your head upon my breast

As it was in the old days!

Paris.

Kiss me!

Cenone.

Your lips are cold.

Paris. [*Raising himself with a gesture of despairing energy.*]

Cenone, bring me life!

Cenone. [*Shrinking, as if frightened.*]

I go, I bring you life.

[*She rises to go.*]

Paris.

I shall live, I shall live, I shall live!

Cenone [*Turning round as she goes, and seeing his face.*]

Ah, ah! what strange smile now is on your face,

It is not love, Oh, now, it is not love.

'Tis confident and cold.

Paris. [*Imperiously.*]

Cenone, life!

Cenone.

Blind, credulous and foolish that I am,

I see too clear, it is not me he wants,

'Tis only life.

Paris.

Cenone!

Cenone.

Smile again,

For when you smile I hate you. I must hate,

Or lose my very reason. Oh, my heart,

'Tis more than I can bear. He does not love me!

He never loved. He never understood

What to love is, he only thought to cozen

With tender words my tender and weak heart,

And lure this wretched gift of life from me,

And when 'twas won to triumph and to smile

Into the arms of Helen.

Paris.

Madness, hear me!

Cenone.

No, no, no, never more!

Paris.

Cenone, stay!

[CENONE *rushes out at the right.* PARIS *tries to follow her, but sinks down.*

Empty now is the world.

Thou must die, Paris.

Now, had I strength, here would I strike myself.

As she condemned me, I condemn myself.

I am a king's son; I have been greatly loved.

This is the end of all, to die alone

And to deserve no other death. Come quickly,

Darkness! Let me forget what thing I am.

Helen!—but no, I must not think of her.

Farewell for ever! All is forfeited—

[*He calls to his attendants below.*

Corythus, Corythus! Emathion!

It comes, it comes, incredible dark death.

Would it had been with shouting and with spears,

That I might rush and wrestle with my doom.

Not stealing in this waft of violets,

To slay me with the sweetness I have lost.

[*After a pause, the two appear from below in haste.*

Come to me. Bear me away. There is no hope.

Corythus.

Oh, my dear prince!

Paris.

Bear me away, but no,

Not down to Troy, for all men hate me there.

When I am dead, still let my body be
 Where I am loved, on Ida's pleasant side;
 Nor let the Trojan rabble rail on me,
 And grin upon my fall. There's many a man
 Would stone my very body on the pyre
 Or have it thrown to dogs. It shall not be.
 Bid these good shepherds and these woodcutters
 Make me a pyre out of the trees I knew—
 I played my pipe beneath them as a boy,
 But gladlier would I hear them toss in flame
 Than rustle leaves in springtime any more.

Corythus.

It shall be done.

Emathion.

Woe for us all!

Corythus.

The gods

Foreknew this thing; they have prepared a pyre.
 The woodcutters have felled the trees this day,
 It stands below. Little I thought to see
 Upon that wood the body of my prince.

Paris.

Lay me on that, and set a torch to it
 This very night.

Corythus.

So soon?

Emathion.

Thou must not die.

Paris.

Let them not come
 From Troy to fetch me, let my body burn
 Even when the breath is from me. The great flame
 Shall summon all the gazing eyes of Troy

And feast their hearts that hate me. But O thou,
 My father Priam, thine old heart prepare
 For this last grief that shall bow down thy head—
 The last of many griefs: yet thou wilt weep,
 I know, even for me who brought them all.

[A paroxysm seizes him.]

My strength goes from me. Hold me, both of you—
 Nay, I will stand alone. Helen, oh, Helen!

[PARIS reels, is caught by the Attendants, who bear him slowly, with murmured lamentations, down the path. After a pause the voice of CENONE is heard timidly raised as she returns.]

Cenone.

Paris! . . . Answer, speak . . . *[when there is no answer.]* Paris, the herb

Is in my hand, the leaves that bring you life.

[Appearing and looking round for PARIS, then stopping in despair.]

Alone and dying in this darkness, oh,
 Where have I driven him? Where lies he now,
 Fainting, perhaps, and fallen on the rocks?
 Help me, help me! Will no one help me!
 I cannot see clear what I have done.
 I was the wronged one, but now
 It is I who am cruel, and he—
 I see him beautiful and suffering there—
 Torture, torture!
 I love him not, no, no, I love him not:
 And yet, and yet, I will not have him die.
 Wretched and desolate I seemed,
 But surely then I was happy,
 As now I am wretched indeed.

How cold it grows, cold as the grave. Paris,
Where are you? Come, come back!

*[The last words are spoken as she goes out
searching among the thicket at the left.]*

HELEN, *in a dark robe, appears between
two trees.*

Helen.

I saw from far flames trembling in these trees

Like many shaken swords; and on the air

A cry lamenting down the darkness came.

—I find a silence, ashes, solitude!

Yet in my mind that flame, that cry, gone on

Before me like dishevelled mourners pass,

Proclaiming through the streets of all the world

“Paris is fled from Helen!” Whither now?

What matters it? The lost may meet the lost.

My feet are bruised, I care not; on, to seek him,

Starve with him on these stony hills, or be

Slain by him in his madness: rather that

Than linger in the loathing eye of Troy.

Cenone. [Heard without, crying.]

Paris!

Helen.

Who in this desert calls on Paris?

Cenone. [Hurriedly appearing.]

I!

If you have found him, bring me straight to him.

Helen.

Know you not then the face of Helen?

Cenone.

Ah!

Helen.

Why stand you now so frozen at my face

Who were this instant like a burning flame?

Cenone.

I am Cenone.

Helen.

Live the dead? Alas!

The world is filled full of my enemies.

Cenone.

Away, away! for when I look on you

A snake bites in my heart to poison it,

And turn me from the thing I mean to do.

Paris, I will. . . . I know not what I say . . .

Fill my thoughts, Paris!

Helen.

Paris is not here.

Cenone.

I left him here; some swoon has taken him,

Crawling, so faint he was, among the rocks,

Alas, alas! But I must find him; see,

Here are the herbs that I will heal him with.

Helen.

O miserable boast of foolish herbs,

When Paris is forsaken of the gods,

Helen of Paris; Troy to-night's a grave,

And all that was of honour upon earth

Trodden to mud and ashes. [*Cries heard below.*]

Cenone.

He is there!

What moments have I wasted! Now at last

I have found him; now he shall be healed, shall live.

Helen.

And when you have healed him!

Cenone.

When I have healed him? . . . Oh! . . .

[*With a sudden change and impetuous gesture.*]

Take you the herbs!

Helen.

I have no faith in them.

Cenone.

Take you the herbs! Look, there are many leaves,
And you must lay them close upon the wound,
They will draw out the poison, he will sleep.
Haste, he is dying, haste.

Helen.

From you? I cannot.

Cenone.

Is it so little to have given you this,
Who have taken everything I had from me,
Given her whom I have hated every hour
These ten years, such a gift? Is it not enough?
Go, go!

Helen.

I fear you, you would humble me.

Cenone.

He is dying; go!

Helen.

Give me them.

[*Turning, she is about to go, when a faint
glare, brightening every moment, appears
beyond.*]

What is that?

Is Troy aflame?

Cenone.

It is not Troy.

Helen.

The flames
Shoot up into the dark; the trees stand round;

And there are faces in the glare, a throng
 All round it, motionless; why move they not?
 See others come, women and men, and kneel,
 And bow their heads.

Cenone.

It is a pyre that burns.

Helen.

And on the pyre—it is not he!

Cenone.

'Tis he.

Helen. [*Dropping the herbs.*]

Now in my enemies' land I am alone.

Cenone.

Oh, that those flames were streaming over me!

Helen.

They blind me, roaring between me and him,

They have devoured my Paris, he is dead,

Paris, for whom I crossed the bitter sea.

Ah, Ah,

But those that hate me live, and only they.

Cenone.

Now, Helen, shall our hearts be proved by fire,
 Your love and my love. Will you not go down,
 Down to that pyre, and take the kiss you crave,
 And fold him in your arms to be your own
 In dying as in living? Will you not?

[HELEN *shudders and is silent.*]

Then leap, you flames, I bring you fuel fit,

A heart that hungers to be fire. So, so,

Die down, and cower, and tremble, and recoil

A moment, to soar up more ardently

And wrap me closer, closer to my love,

My love with me at last. Paris, I come!

ENONE *disappears down the hill.* HELEN *gazes after her in horror; then, when a loud cry of many voices is heard below, and the flames leap up, she covers her face with her robe, as the curtain falls.*

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